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## PRESS RELEASE

# Baker-Polito Administration Announces New Grants to Boost Diversity in the Tech Sector

Nearly \$470,000 in awards support projects to increase diversity in tech sector jobs across the Commonwealth

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Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

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**SPRINGFIELD** — Today, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Assistant Secretary of Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship for the Commonwealth Damon Cox, MassTech Executive Director Carolyn Kirk, Springfield Mayor Domenic Sarno, Senator Eric Lesser, Representative and Chair of the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus (MBLLC) Carlos González, and other state and local leaders to announce the inaugural grant recipients from the Tech Talent Diversity Initiative, an effort aimed at boosting diversity in the Commonwealth’s technology and innovation sectors. The two competitive grants, totaling \$469,234, were awarded to Tech Foundry of Springfield and to the New England Venture Capital Association’s Hack.Diversity program based in Boston, both of which are programs with track records of success in training and advancing diverse candidates into technology jobs.

Today’s announcement was made at Tech Foundry in Springfield, and was followed by a roundtable discussion showcasing the Commonwealth’s commitment to making its technology workforce more reflective of the demographics of Massachusetts by increasing black, Latinx and female representation in tech roles. The new awards will help supercharge the Tech Foundry and Hack.Diversity programs and address critical issues such as continued employee training, enhancing mentorship for new hires, and promoting tolerance and inclusive hiring practices within organizations.

“As the Massachusetts technology sector continues to grow, it is important that its growth benefits everyone, and that we increase opportunities for citizens across the state to have access to these stable, high-paying jobs,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.** “Promoting diversity can only make the Commonwealth and the tech sector stronger, and programs like the Tech Talent Diversity Initiative will assist underrepresented populations connect with job opportunities and receive the ongoing support needed for continued success.”

“Our administration is committed to building a Massachusetts economy that works for everyone,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** “Partnerships with organizations like Tech Foundry and the New England Venture

Capital Association provide critical training and mentorship to workers, open doors to new career opportunities for residents, and fulfill the talent demands of our growing innovation economy.”

“These new grants will help Massachusetts continue to close the opportunity gap while meeting the unending employment needs of the region’s tech companies,” **said Damon Cox, Assistant Secretary of Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship for the Commonwealth.** “We’re excited to see how these awards can boost the engagement level of each program to increase capacity and bring more candidates and employers into these programs.”

**Tech Foundry’s** grant of **\$94,234** will enable them to undertake a two-part project. The first is a pilot of a ramp-to-hire program that places students in extended work experiences as part of their IT training that can transition from paid internships to permanent employment. The ramp-to-hire pilot will directly tackle the work-experience gap that is preventing more diverse talent from accessing opportunities in the technology economy. The second part is a partnership with the Healing Racism Institute of the Pioneer Valley to provide training, support and peer learning related to diversity and inclusion within organizations.

**Hack.Diversity’s** grant of **\$375,000** will allow them to appoint three program managers will who support a class of 75 fellows for an eight month fellowship for black and Latinx tech talent. The fellowship consists of mentorship and professional development while fellows are placed at an area employer. Host companies in the program participate in workshops and discussions on topics such as unconscious bias, inclusive hiring practices and equitable talent development strategies.

“Closing the opportunity gap is about more than just filling jobs for the sake of an economic report. It’s about giving people the right training, mentorship, and employer support so they can build a lifelong career in the technology sector,” **said MassTech Executive Director Carolyn Kirk.** “The work by these two groups goes a long way to giving people the tools and support not just for a tech job but a career in tech and innovation.”

“Tech Foundry is honored to be recognized for its impact in the Western Mass region and included in the Tech Talent Diversity Initiative,” **said Natalie Miknaitis, Interim Executive Director Tech Foundry.** “We are excited to continue to hone in on our mission of elevating underrepresented groups into careers in IT. This opportunity strengthens our foundation by allowing us to approach our work from multiple angles for the first time and to maximize our impact by ensuring that all Tech Foundry graduates have a sustained pathway to success.”

“Hack.Diversity is a living example of the kind of forward-thinking, impact-driven innovation that makes Massachusetts a world-leader,” **said Jody Rose, NEVCA President and Hack.Diversity Cofounder.** “In three short years we’ve touched over 150 Fellows and more than 20 Host companies. The new funding from MTC will power more robust talent and alumni programming and broader company engagement, enabling Hack to reach farther into the innovation community, and leverage the power of its past success to drive even

deeper impact moving forward.”

“Congratulations to Tech Foundry on this well deserved funding,” **said Senator Eric Lesser**. “We know the tech sector has tremendous potential to create jobs and improve quality of life, but has struggled to build a diverse workforce. This funding will help ensure more communities in the Pioneer Valley share in this vital and fast growing field, and that local companies also benefit from the expertise and talents of more of our residents.”

“Tech Foundry plays a key role in developing our tech talent workforce which, in turn, drives our regional economy and expands economic opportunity in the greater Springfield area,” **said Representative Angelo J. Puppalo**. “This grant will allow them to continue their mission of elevating under-represented groups in this field, and I am excited to see what they accomplish.”

“Congratulations to Tech Foundry and thanks to Lt. Governor Karyn Polito,” said **Springfield Mayor Domenic J Sarno**. “The Baker-Polito Administration has truly been a great partner with my administration in enhancing workforce development initiatives that creates ‘a good four-letter word’ – Jobs.”

### The [Tech Talent Diversity Initiative](#)

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managed by the Innovation Institute at the MassTech Collaborative launched in May 2019 with the purpose of financially supporting ideas from civic, business, or nonprofit organizations that increase the diversity of candidates who get hired for internships, apprenticeships, and entry level jobs in the Commonwealth’s tech sector. MassTech also manages the [Intern Partnership program](#)

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a six year old program that provides stipends to support paid internships for homegrown graduate and undergraduate students working at growing digital technology companies across the state. The Intern Partnership’s support for internships at small tech companies statewide, and the requirement that each internship must be paid, allows students who might otherwise pass on an unpaid internship to get enhanced hands-on training while working at a small, fast growing tech startup.

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### About the Innovation Institute at MassTech

**The Innovation Institute** is the entity that advances a core mission of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative: improving the conditions for innovation and cluster growth across the Commonwealth. Created in 2003, the Innovation Institute intervenes in the economy in the following four ways:

- Conducts research and analysis that improves the states understandings of unmet needs and opportunities in the states innovation economy;
- Serves as convener and key strategic broker on the landscape;
- Manages high-value projects on behalf of the Commonwealth; and
- Makes strategic investments in support of innovation-based economic development.

In addition, the Innovation Institute provides support for priority industry clusters such as Big Data, Advanced Manufacturing, the Internet of Things (IoT), Cybersecurity, and Robotics; supports cluster growth through university investments; and manages specialty funds such as the Entrepreneur Mentorship Initiative, and the Global Entrepreneur in Residence (GEIR) Program. For more information visit

<https://innovation.masstech.org/>

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